

REMARKS

Claims 1-4 and 6-19 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 5 is canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. The Specification and claims 1-4, 6-12 and 14 are amended. Claims 16-19 are added.

It is noted that the claim amendments are made only for more particularly pointing out the invention, and not for distinguishing the invention over the prior art, narrowing the claims or for any statutory requirements of patentability. Further, Applicants specifically state that no amendment to any claim herein should be construed as a disclaimer of any interest in or right to an equivalent of any element or feature of the amended claim.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the allowance of claims 11-15, as well as the indication that claims 5-7 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. As claim 1 is amended to include the allowable subject matter of canceled claim 5, claims 1-4 and 6-10 are in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully submit that the remaining pending claims are allowable for the reasons discussed below.

With respect to the prior art rejections, claims 1-4 and 8-10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Shimizu, et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,069,440). Applicants note that there appears to be a typographical error on page 2, no. 4, of the Office Action ("Claims 1" should be "Claims 1-4 and 8-10"). This error has been confirmed by the Examiner. The prior art rejection is rendered moot by the incorporation of allowable claim 5 into independent claim 1.

The rejection is respectfully traversed in the following discussion.

I. Formal Matters

A. Information Disclosure Statement

An Information Disclosure Statement was filed on March 25, 2005, together with three pages of Form PTO-1449. Only page one of three was returned to Applicants initialed. Applicants respectfully request that pages two and three be initialed and returned to Applicants to indicate receipt and consideration of the references listed thereon.

B. Claim Objections

Claims 9 and 10 are objected to for reciting allegedly confusing language. As the

claims are amended in response to the objection, withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

C. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, Applicants submit that claims 1-4 and 6-19, all the claims presently pending in the application, are patentably distinct over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue at the earliest possible time.

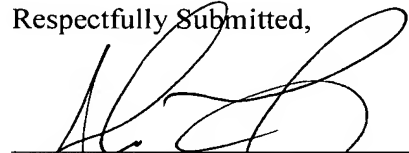
Should the Examiner find the application to be other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to discuss any other changes deemed necessary in a telephonic or personal interview.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in fees or to credit any overpayment in fees to Attorney's Deposit Account No. 50-0481.

Date:

11/7/06

Respectfully Submitted,


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